"Tips to Dancers"

Good Manners

for

Ballroom and Dance Hall

by

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"This book is dedicated to all Dancers wishing to know the details of Ballroom Etiquette, and desiring to overcome self consciousness, uncertainty and embarrassment."

Dancing—"The purest exerciser of health, the kind refresher of the wearied spirit."

CONTENTS

The Value of Good Manners - - 9-10

The Modern Dances - - - - - - 10

Getting Dressed for the Party - 10-12

BALLROOM ETIQUETTE

The Spirit of the Ballroom - 12-14

The Stag - - - - - - - 14-15

The Programs - - - - - - 15-18

The Grand March - - - 18-19

The Dancing - - - - - 19-21

The Intermission - - - 21

The Conversation - - - - 21-23

The Introduction - - - - 23-26

The Circle Two-Step - - - 26-28

POPULARITY - - - - - 28-30

THE VALUE OF GOOD MANNERS

Anyone who attends dancing parties, public or private, should know not only how to dance fairly well, but should also know what to do and what to say. Many little points of courtesy must be kept in mind continually. These courtesies may seem trivial, but their importance cannot be overestimated.

A rude act is rarely forgotten, and its damaging influence may be felt not only in society, but also in business.

One's manners are an index to one's character. The majority of the people whom we know are not real friends but merely acquaintances who know us only superficially and judge us by our personal appearance and manners. If we would be judged favorably, we must be well-mannered.

Good manners should be practiced persistently and faithfully until they become habitual. The true gentleman always does the right thing automatically, without thinking. It would be impossible for him to be discourteous.

To be on one's "company behaviour" is a dreadful strain. A person, ordinarily uncouth, and ill-mannered, is a most pathetic sight at a party, when vainly trying to remember all of his "company manners." To avoid this, have "company manners" all of the time!

Discourtesies are the result of ignorance and of forgetfulness. If yours are the result of ignorance, let this little book serve as a friendly teacher; if of forgetfulness, let it be a timely reminder.

THE MODERN DANCES

After a stormy and chaotic period of dance revolution, and constant changing, dancing has once more become settled. The one-step and fox-trot have become standardized, and the steps are now sane and practical.

The days of "dance bluffing" have passed. The good dancers in all parts of the nation are dancing certain definite steps. If you do not know what these steps are, be wise—take a few dancing lessons and find out. You will be well repaid for the small sum invested and you will spare yourself and your friends much discomfort and annoyance.

GETTING DRESSED FOR THE PARTY

If the party is to be formal, it is the duty of every guest to dress formally, the lady in decollete gown, the man in dress suit. To appear in informal attire would be an insult to the host or hostess. When taking a young woman to a formal party, it is customary for

the man to send her flowers and to hire a taxi. Sending flowers is not absolutely necessary; it depends upon the man's pocketbook; if he can afford them, they will please his friend immensely, because every woman loves flowers. At school and college parties it is quite common to issue "a ban on flowers."

Before going to a dance, bathe well and replace all of the garments worn at work with fresh, clean ones. A dancer should be as clean as possible—in person and in garments. "Dirty linen and unclean fingernails have lost many a man a good job." An offensive body odor detected from a dancer proves that soap and water and frequent bathing are to him unknown quantities. In the ballroom, unclean skin, clothes and handkerchiefs are unpardonable.

Always carry at least three or four clean handkerchiefs to a dance, and use them if your hands perspire. The lady should hold a clean one in her right hand while dancing, and the man should hold one in his right to protect the lady's gown.

Shoes make a vast difference in one's dancing and should be chosen very carefully. It is altogether possible to dance beautifully in one pair of shoes, and to be awkwardness personified in another. Clumsy dancing is very often due to clumsy shoes. Invest in a pair of shoes made especially for dancing, wear them only for dancing. After

each party, clean them and place them on shoe forms and they will last for a long time.

A satisfactory dancing pump for ladies is a black satin pump with low heel and soft, pliable sole. Women should wear high heels only for dressy affairs; if they are worn continually, they tend to weaken the foot muscles and break down the arch, which is very painful.

A man should not try to dance in his stiff, heavy, working shoes and thus endanger his partner's feet and impair his own dancing. He will be able to dance much better in a regulation dancing shoe with black cloth top, black patent leather vamp, and thin sole. A black patent leather oxford is also comfortable and good-looking.

When dressing for a dance, follow the slogan, "Safety First," and remove all chewing gum from your pockets, so that you will not be tempted to use it at the party. A polite person will chew gum only in the privacy of his own room. Anyone who chews gum loudly and persistently throughout the evening is rude, vulgar and ignorant.

BALLROOM ETIQUETTE

THE SPIRIT OF THE BALLROOM

From the time you enter the ballroom or dance hall to the time you leave, remember that dancing is our

foremost form of recreation and social intercourse. We go to a dance to have a good time and to see that others have a good time. The spirit of the ballroom is one of good-will, kindness, and consideration of others. Do your part to maintain this spirit. Do not cause others embarrassment or discomfort. Do not talk about other people or say anything about them that you would not like them to hear.

When you attend a party always arrive and leave at the appointed time. If all the guests should arrive an hour or so late and leave an hour or so early the party would be ruined and the host greatly grieved.

Always greet the host and hostess upon arrival, and when you depart tell them that you appreciated the invitation, and had an enjoyable time. In the case of dancing classes, and assemblies in academies or studios, it is courteous to greet the teacher and to say good-bye when you leave.

At a dance where all of the men are gentlemen, there are no "wallflowers." It is the duty of every man to seek out the ladies who have no partners and dance with them. As long as there are partners to be had. it is the duty of the man to dance. Being "too tired" is a poor excuse; any able bodied man ought to be able to dance a program of dances without sitting out and resting during a portion of them.

At a private party, the gentlemen guests should offer to dance with the hostess or members of her family.

At a party, where all of the guests know each other, it is inexcusable for any man to go home alone, and let the women go home unescorted. It is the gentleman's duty to see that all of the ladies are properly escorted home. He should escort one or two, or three if necessary.

THE STAG

The success of many dancing parties is endangered by the presence of a large number of "stags." A stag is a fellow who comes alone or with other fellows. He offers a variety of excuses for not having escorted a lady. In some cases, it is a shortage of funds; in others, the inability to "make a date." Translated from slang to English, "make a date" means that a man makes arrangements with some young lady to accompany him. Usually, the stag is a fellow whose chief fault is procrastination. He does not plan to go to the dance far enough in advance to allow himself time to invite a lady to accompany him.

Those stags who block the doorway of the dance hall, while smoking cigarettes, and remarking about the dancers, without offering to take part, should have stayed at home.

The man who brings a lady to a party and enters into the spirit of the dance and of making others happy, is

sure to be rewarded by having a better time himself and by feeling that he has helped to make others have a good time.

A stranger in town, a man who has no lady friends, is an exception to the ruling against stags. In order to become acquainted it is proper for him to go alone.

THE PROGRAMS

The programs are distributed at the door, in the cloak room, or during a grand march. It is the duty of the man to make out the programs for the lady whom he has escorted to the dance and for himself. It is best to make out the programs all at once and as early in the evening as possible.

The method of filling out the programs, when all of the men have brought ladies, is to "trade straight across." This means that two couples arrange to exchange a dance, the man of the first couple dancing with the lady of the second, and the man of the second with the lady of the first.

Since the man has charge of filling the programs, he should consider the preferences of his lady and secure for her the partners she would most enjoy. He should not dance with an unescorted lady unless he has first made arrangements with someone to dance with his own partner.

During the evening the lady should not be left alone except for the few minutes when her escort is locating a new partner, and bringing him to her to be introduced.

In regard to the number of dances to keep with one's partner, times have changed, and it is permissible for a young woman to dance several times with the gentleman who has brought her to the party. It is quite proper to exchange only half of the dances.

There are two reasons in this change of opinion. At the dancing parties in cities, large schools, or colleges, it would be impossible to find more than a half dozen people whom you know and desire to dance with. The second reason is modern dancing. It is not considered a very great pleasure to dance ten dances with ten different partners, all of whom may be but mediocre dancers.

It is nearly impossible to dance at your very best with a person with whom you have never before danced. Today, the chief pleasure of dancing is in knowing how to dance well with a few partners, and not badly with many.

Each man has certain peculiarities in his dancing; he has an individual style which is slightly different from that of every other dancer. In order to follow well, a lady must become perfectly familiar with her partner's particular dance style, and this can but rarely be accomplished during the course of a single dance number.

This "individualism" in dancing makes the dancing more interesting and enjoyable, and makes it more of an "art." People do not dance alike any more than they would walk exactly alike. Observe people walking on the streets and you will soon discover that no two of them walk just the same.

By dancing every other dance with one's partner, one will learn how to dance well with that partner and will facilitate the problem of introductions and the finding of partners. At a very large party, it is always wise to appoint a meeting place for the persons with whom dances have been arranged.

In filling out a program, the man should write his name on the first line of his lady's program, and her name on his. To indicate their dances, a double cross xx should be used. In trading dances, care should be taken to write the correct name on the correct line and in the right program.

In case one is learning how to dance, it is wise to "sit out" a few dances, and have consideration for one's partner.

If you must "cut a dance" because you are leaving early or for some other reason, apologize to the couple whose dance you are cutting.

At a program dance where the men and women come separately, each one keeps his or her own program. When the man invites a lady to dance he writes his name on her program after the number they decide to dance together.

When there are no programs, the man says, "May I have this dance?" whereupon she replies, "Certainly," or "Yes." He should not say, "Have you this dance?" This question is impertinent. Whether or not she has the dance previously engaged does not really concern him. What he wants to know is whether she will give the dance to him!

It is a woman's privilege to refuse to dance if she is tired or indisposed, but if she refuses to accept the invitation of one man she must not give the same dance to another.

THE GRAND MARCH

Upon entering the dance hall, the lady should precede the man and the chaperone should precede the younger lady. As soon as the music begins, the men should immediately find partners for the march or dance, whichever it may be.

A formal party is opened with a Grand March. The host and hostess and members of the family lead the march. At a subscription ball, the chairman of the committee and his lady are the leaders. The members of the committee follow next, and then the other guests.

In the march the man should present his right arm to the lady, she rests her finger tips in the crook of his arm. The couples should march in step and in

time to the music; they should step on the left on the accented beat of the music. The man should gauge the length of his step by that of his partner.

THE DANCING

It is not necessary to hold one's partner so close that breathing is almost impossible, to say nothing of dancing. The man or woman who draws the partner closely lacks a sense of propriety. To dance in close position with some dancers is almost unbearable; stumbling, crushed feet, knocked knees, and general discomfort are the result. Some people say that they cannot dance far apart; they should notice that superior dancers can dance at any distance from the partner. Difficult steps may be executed more satisfactorily when the partners are not close together. If a faulty step occurs one can look down at the partner's feet and get into step immediately.

The man should do all of the leading. If the lady tries to lead, he should ask her not to. It is impossible to dance well when both try to lead.

When beginning to dance the one-step or trot, the man should not lead fancy combinations, until he has led the plain walking steps long enough to become adjusted to the time of the music and the steps of his partner.

The automobile driver does not look at his clutch pedal while driving his car, but some men watch their feet while dancing and then wonder why other couples bump into him continually!

Other men dance backward most of the time and consequently bump into every couple in the hall. Common sense and hard knocks ought to tell him that if he is leading he must see where he is going. It would be just as sensible for him to walk backward down the street! A man who knows how to lead well, rarely collides with other dancers. In case an accident of this kind does occur, always ask to be excused.

When the music stops, it is the duty of the man to clap to show his appreciation of the music and of his partner's dancing. Not to clap, implies that he enjoyed neither one.

The lady should lead the way to the chairs; if she does not take the initiative, the man should ask her where she would like to sit; it is her privilege to decide. When escorting the lady to the seats, if the party is formal, the man should present his right arm as in the grand march. If the party is informal, he may walk beside her or slightly behind, but never in advance unless there is a large crowd and it is necessary to make way for her.

Upon entering the hall, or crossing the floor it is courteous for the man to take the lady's arm, holding his right

hand under her left elbow. When the floor is very slippery and when a girl is wearing shoes with high French heels, she will appreciate this little courtesy.

THE INTERMISSION

The man should stand until the lady is seated, and then take the chair at her left. It is not proper for the lady to sit with her knees crossed, and it is not healthful for either man or woman. It is a bad habit, it impairs the circulation and is said to cause rheumatism, hardening of the arteries, and other diseases.

During the intermission, the man should remain with his partner, and not leave until the music begins again. When he leaves he should thank her for the dance and ask to be excused.

Do not settle down and go to sleep during the intermission. You must entertain your partner, and whether or not you feel so inclined, you must talk, not incessantly of course, but now and then you must say something. If you remain glum and silent, your partner will think that you are stupid, bashful, or rude.

THE CONVERSATION

It is very easy to find things to say to our best friends, but it is sometimes very difficult to talk to strangers. To

start with nothing and eventually develop an intensely interesting conversation is an accomplishment of which one should be proud.

Remember how much there is in this world that we do not know. Every person we meet can teach us something that we have not known before. Meeting strangers is the most fascinating and interesting privilege that we possess. To the man or woman who is alert and eager to seize every opportunity to gain knowledge, this is an education in itself.

When you first meet a person, meet him with an open mind, free from prejudice and hasty judgments. Make yourself think that you are going to like him, and keep on thinking this until he does something definite to make you change your mind.

To start the conversation, try to find out what he is most interested in. Is it his work, recreation, or some hobby? A clever person can find this out in a very few minutes, and then the question will be how to stop the conversation and not how to start it. Listen well and be interested in what he is saying. Encouraged by your apparently genuine interest in his words, he will talk on and on. Learn how to listen well and you will not have to do much of the talking; everyone will talk to you. The old saying, "Give a man a good listener and he will tell all he knows," works unfailingly with both men and women. Nobody is going to

talk to you if your eyes are roving elsewhere and if your face is blank and expressionless, or if you show plainly that you have no interest in what the other person is saying.

Always go half way in making conversation; do not answer question after question with a blunt monosyllable. This is hardly civil; it exasperates the other party and causes him to dislike you. Do your part to keep the conversational ball rolling.

In a crowd of friends, do not melt into the background and let the others do all of the talking. Do not let them forget that you are present. Push yourself to the front, say something, don't be a nonentity. It is not necessary to dominate the conversation, but express yourself occasionally and show that you are wide awake and interested in what is going on.

If you have nothing to say it is either because you won't make the effort to talk or because you have no store of knowledge from which to draw facts. If the latter is true, begin at once to study, observe, and read good books and magazines. Educate yourself. The more educated a man is the more interesting he is, and the more things he has to talk about.

THE INTRODUCTION

At a dance, when a man is introduced to a lady by a mutual friend, he is expected to invite her to dance. If he

does not do this, he is making a decided breach of etiquette. If his dances are all engaged, he should tell her so, and apologize.

Introduce a man to a woman, not vice versa. Use any one of these forms of introduction:

Miss Harris, allow me to present Mr. Brown.

Miss Harris, allow me to introduce Mr. Brown.

Miss Harris, I want you to meet Mr. Brown.

Miss Harris, Mr. Brown.

A man who is seated should rise when introduced to a lady. She may offer to shake hands, but a slight bow is sufficient. A man should always shake hands when introduced to another man.

A lady who is seated should rise when introduced to an older lady. When introduced to a young woman it is optional, and depends upon circumstances. A lady need not rise when introduced to a man.

When introduced, say something definite, do not mumble confusedly. Say, "How do you do?" or "I am glad to know you." When you make this remark, look at the other person in a frank, straightforward manner. It is insulting to let your eyes wander and to appear wholly unconcerned about the person to whom you are being introduced.

When introducing people, be very careful to pronounce their names distinctly. At formal parties, ridiculous mistakes are made by members of the reception committee. Names are distorted beyond all recognition. This is due to haste and the mumbling of names; it would be well to take a little more time and pronounce each name clearly and correctly.

Every man, woman, and child should cultivate a strong, sincere, convincing hand clasp. Your hand clasp is vastly important. At an introduction, you must create the most favorable impression possible. The first impression is usually lasting. It may be the beginning of an everlasting friendship, or it may mean that the person does not want to have anything further to do with you.

When you say, "I am glad to know you," back it up with a firm hand clasp, a smile, and a sincere look of the eye. Observe people who are being introduced, try to determine by watching their eyes, face, and hand clasp whether or not they are telling the truth when they say, "I am glad to know you."

Some men shake hands like little girls, not like men. The clasp is weak, clammy, and meaningless. When you know nothing else about a man except a hand clasp like that, you cannot help but judge him by it, and that judgment cannot be favorable.

At most public dances, there is an official present who would be glad to introduce those who ask for introductions. If there is no such official, it is proper for a man to introduce himself to a lady and then invite her to dance. He should not feel hurt if he is refused. At a public dance a man must take a chance at having his invitations accepted. He might ask a lady who has come to the dance with her own personal friends, and of course she would refuse to dance with a stranger when her own friends are present.

A man, if refused, should not be discouraged but should ask other ladies, there will surely be ladies who will be glad to dance with him.

It is not considered good form to become familiar with persons met in this way at a public dance. After dancing with a person, let the acquaintance drop right there unless introduced by a mutual friend. In this event, it would be proper for the gentleman to escort the lady to her home and to ask permission to call.

THE CIRCLE TWO-STEP

The object of introducing circle two-steps and other cotillion figures into our present day dancing parties, is to "mix the crowd," to make all of the dancers acquainted and to break up the ever present cliques.

Every dancer should enter into these

"mixers" heartily, it will not hurt anyone to dance occasionally with partners not of his own choice. A good fellow, a true sport, always takes the partners that come to him and makes them have a good time.

The director who calls out the figures must be obeyed implicitly. Everyone must execute the orders correctly. If this is not done, confusion results, and the combination is spoiled. The charm is lost when the figure is not executed smoothly and without blunders.

When told to join hands in a circle, the man should have his partner at his right side, if he stands on the wrong side he may ruin the entire figure. When asked to join hands in a circle, the men present their hands palms up and the ladies palms down. Join hands and then move back slightly so as to stretch out the circle and make it round.

When the command is given, "Grand Right and Left," always face your partner, joint right hands, walk forward (without turning), pass your partner, join left hands with the next person, then right with the next, etc. When the command, "Halt and Dance with the Partner Opposite," is given, stop right where you are and dance with the opposite partner; do not walk on and take another person with whom you would rather dance. Set aside your personal preferences, and do not deliberately hurt the feelings of another.

The meanness in human nature is shown beautifully in circle two-steps. The person who does mean and underhanded things in the dance hall should be pointed out and labeled as "a ballroom snob," a classification not to be proud of. The snob thinks himself a little better than everyone else; actually he is not so good. He is grossly conceited, but in reality he has nothing about which to be conceited, not even common sense!

POPULARITY

Popularity is something that we can all have if we but make up our minds to have it. It is something that is not merely "wished on us"; if we would have it, we must work for it, and earn it.

If you desire popularity in the ballroom, follow carefully the suggestions offered in this list of "Don'ts":

Don't put off learning how to dance well; perhaps there is some little thing wrong with your dancing; let some good dancing teacher diagnose your case and give you helpful, individual suggestions. Every popular person is an "above the average dancer."

Don't sit and grouch, girls, when the boys do not ask you to dance. Smile and look good-natured. Learn to enjoy watching other people dance, and learn how to dance well with

other girls. The popular girl knows how to lead other girls, and she can have a wonderful time dancing with girls when there are not enough boys to go around.

Don't be a "clam," but talk and entertain your partners. To be popular you must be a clever talker and a good listener.

Don't be boisterous and try to attract attention to yourself by loud words and laughter. They attract only criticism and ridicule. The popular person does not shout when he talks.

Don't think that going just half way will win popularity. The successful person in business or society goes more than half way and does more than is expected of him. Do more in the way of kindness than is expected of you.

Don't refuse to dance with one person and then dance with another. This always creates hard feelings.

Don't blush and stammer. Be composed, and forget about yourself; think more of other people. Self-consciousness is a phase of selfishness.

Don't be afraid of other people; don't think that everyone is watching you. Other people think that you are watching them!

Don't refuse to dance with someone who is learning how to dance; help him, and he will always remember

your kindness and thoughtfulness. Everyone is at some time a poor dancer.

Don't forget, girls, that the secret of becoming popular with your boy friends is to always make them feel at ease. Learn how to feel at home when at parties, and then make your friends feel the same way.

Don't forget that you are most attractive when you are just your true self; don't assume an affected air. The person who is guilty of "putting on airs" at parties is hopelessly silly and foolish.

Don't get into the habit of talking "small talk." It is meaningless and uninteresting. Say something that is worth while, sensible, and intelligent. "Small talk," when used continually, indicates the "small mind."

Don't show your displeasure, conceal it. If someone has hurt your feelings, cast the injury aside, forget it. It hurts the offender more than it does you.

Don't monopolize the best dancers, boys; appreciate the fact that at dances the girls are in a helpless, perhaps unjust position, because they must wait to be invited to dance. Please be considerate!

Don't be grouchy, a smile is priceless. "Smiles and kindness are like a boomerang; if you send them out they will come straight back to you."

LIKE PEOPLE,
AND THEY WILL LIKE YOU!